

2021 Higher Education Website Benchmarks



SUMMARY

Institutions brought less traffic to their sites in 2021 than in 2020, but a higher share of new users. They also stayed longer on the site each time they visited.

Bounce rates were up across the board, and only mid-sized private 4-year colleges saw their sessions per user increase. The majority of visitors left without taking any action. Retaining an audience is as important as attracting an audience.

TikTok is making the biggest impact on traffic to 2-year colleges, it was the second-highest social source behind Facebook. It was the fourth-largest source for 4-year colleges behind Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. In both cases, however, it was poor at bringing an engaged audience. Unexpectedly, it was the largest social traffic source with for-profit colleges.

As institutions get larger, the volume of social media traffic increases but also contributes a smaller percentage of site traffic.



RESULTS

Higher Ed Site Metrics



Benchmarking type	Average Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session	Average Page Load (s)*
2-year public: Small (<3,065)	359,473	42%	136	2.4	49%	2.7	4
2-year public: Mid-sized (3,065-8,942)	959,241	44%	164	2.4	41%	2.8	3
2-year public: Large (>8,942)	1,471,891	47%	169	2.3	52%	2.5	5
2-year for profit: Small (<195)	50,944	76%	85	1.3	62%	2.0	6
2-year for profit: Mid-sized (195-542)	349,923	73%	90	1.4	59%	2.1	6
2-year for profit: Large (>542)	498,029	73%	80	1.4	67%	2.2	7
2-year private: Mid-sized (106-372)	481,546	83%	63	4.1	14%	4.4	6
4-year public: Small (<4,970)	1,029,436	45%	140	2.2	52%	2.4	4
4-year public: Mid-sized (4,970-15,098)	4,097,039	39%	156	2.5	48%	2.5	4
4-year public: Large (>15,098)	7,752,248	44%	197	2.3	47%	2.6	4
4-year private: Small (<648)	301,958	62%	131	1.7	53%	2.8	5
4-year private: Mid-sized (648-2,327)	873,895	54%	144	4.7	53%	2.5	4
4-year private: Large (>2,327)	2,679,200	52%	163	1.9	49%	2.6	5
4-year for profit: Small (<349)	148,880	77%	76	1.3	66%	1.9	5
4-year for profit: Mid-sized (349-902)	591,043	69%	77	1.4	66%	1.8	7
4-year for profit: Large (>902)	1,424,741	63%	93	1.6	55%	1.9	6
Graduate Only	419,009	66%	121	1.5	63%	2.2	6
Overall	1,381,676	59%	123	1.9	52%	2.5	5

*seconds

Higher Ed Search Traffic



Search Source	2021 Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
Ask	15	65%	144	2.4	49%	2.8
Baidu	2,058	88%	79	1.1	76%	1.9
Bing	39,471	42%	193	2.3	40%	3.1
DuckDuckGo	5,826	59%	160	1.6	45%	2.9
Ecosia.org	2,232	42%	174	2.5	43%	3.0
Google	857,376	49%	175	2.0	47%	2.8
Naver	62	79%	143	1.4	49%	3.5
So.com	14	91%	66	1.2	75%	1.7
Sogou	118	97%	19	1.0	88%	1.2
Yahoo	14,251	45%	182	2.1	41%	3.0
Yandex	25	80%	126	1.4	52%	2.7

*seconds

Higher Ed Social Media Traffic



Social Network	Average Sessions	New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Sessions per User	Bounce Rate	Pageviews per Session
Facebook	27,351	76%	71	1.2	68%	1.7
Instagram	1,104	69%	105	1.4	52%	2.4
Instagram Stories	855	88%	46	1.1	60%	1.9
LinkedIn	3,974	68%	91	1.4	62%	2.0
Pinterest	192	79%	65	1.2	65%	1.8
reddit	402	75%	74	1.2	65%	1.9
Sina Weibo	24	82%	48	1.0	69%	2.0
TikTok	1,551	80%	48	1.2	68%	1.8
Tumblr	5	51%	109	1.5	60%	2.2
Twitter	5,030	58%	123	1.6	58%	2.2
YouTube	623	56%	176	1.8	51%	2.8

*seconds

Higher Ed International Share of Traffic



Benchmarking type	Average International Sessions	Average Percent International
2-year public: Small (<3,065)	18,757	15%
2-year public: Mid-sized (3,065-8,942)	59,159	5%
2-year public: Large (>8,942)	36,170	3%
2-year for profit: Small (<195)	8,806	20%
2-year for profit: Mid-sized (195-542)	20,875	8%
2-year for profit: Large (>542)	77,862	17%
2-year private: Mid-sized (106-372)	124,662	26%
4-year public: Small (<4,970)	93,719	9%
4-year public: Mid-sized (4,970-15,098)	437,686	10%
4-year public: Large (>15,098)	823,407	11%
4-year private: Small (<648)	78,652	23%
4-year private: Mid-sized (648-2,327)	125,170	13%
4-year private: Large (>2,327)	389,715	14%
4-year for profit: Small (<349)	36,881	20%
4-year for profit: Mid-sized (349-902)	78,831	8%
4-year for profit: Large (>902)	170,841	13%
Graduate Only	120,779	25%

METHODOLOGY

These benchmarks are based upon website traffic data for the 2021 calendar year aggregated across 442 higher ed institutions. All institutions included use Google Analytics to track and report on their website traffic, and all granted Niche read-only access to their Google Analytics. In order to calculate industry benchmarks for key traffic metrics, the data across all institutions was pulled via the Google Analytics API and the average value among all institutions was calculated for each metric.

Higher Ed Google Ads Results



Benchmarking type	Avg. Google Ad Spend	Average CPC	Average Clicks	Avg. New Sessions	Avg. Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
2-year public: Small (<3,065)	\$12,855	\$1.70	36,567	48%	98	47%	2.6
2-year public: Mid-sized (3,065-8,942)	\$22,090	\$1.04	16,913	58%	91	70%	1.9
2-year public: Large (>8,942)	\$249,204	\$0.99	248,063	40%	153	34%	2.6
2-year for profit: Small (<195)	\$131,133	\$4.19	41,396	73%	62	64%	1.8
2-year for profit: Mid-sized (195-542)	\$1,174,819	\$3.96	133,815	75%	52	65%	1.9
2-year for profit: Large (>542)	\$1,061,424	\$4.95	231,555	58%	64	73%	1.9
4-year public: Small (<4,970)	\$37,913 ▲	\$2.32 ▲	25,419 ▼	59% ▲	94 ▲	61% ▼	2.2 -
4-year public: Mid-sized (4,970-15,098)	\$150,957 ▲	\$1.38 ▲	168,709 ▲	63% ▲	75 ▼	58% ▼	2.2 ▲
4-year public: Large (>15,098)	\$148,529 ▲	\$1.83 ▲	154,906 ▲	70% ▲	95 ▲	71% ▲	1.8 ▼
4-year private: Small (<648)	\$52,602 ▼	\$2.11 ▼	51,474 ▼	73% ▼	79 ▲	62% ▲	2.3 ▲
4-year private: Mid-sized (648-2,327)	\$193,005 ▲	\$2.42 ▼	100,887 ▲	73% ▲	68 ▲	65% ▼	1.8 ▼
4-year private: Large (>2,327)	\$513,551 ▲	\$3.01 ▲	242,047 ▲	72% ▲	74 ▼	63% ▲	1.9 ▼
4-year for profit: Small (<349)	\$72,894	\$2.68	33,159	82%	45	42%	2.0
4-year for profit: Mid-sized (349-902)	\$508,742	\$7.87	78,078	79%	33	88%	1.3
4-year for profit: Large (>902)	\$5,352,223	\$8.17	702,470	72%	50	63%	1.6
Graduate Only	\$120,908 ▲	\$3.07 ▲	35,496 ▲	74% ▲	73 ▼	65% ▲	1.9 ▼
Overall	\$612,678	\$3.23	153,324	70%	72	63%	1.9

*seconds

The key traffic metrics benchmarked are:

- Total Sessions
- Percent New Sessions
- Bounce Rate
- Average Session Duration
- Pageviews per Session
- Sessions per User
- Average Page Load Time

Additionally, for those with Google Ads connected Niche benchmarked:

- 2021 ad spend
- CPC (cost per click)
- Clicks

Higher Ed Paid



Benchmarking type	Average Sessions	Average New Sessions	Average Session Duration (s)*	Avg. Sessions per User	Average Bounce Rate	Avg. Pageviews per Session
2-year public: Small (<3,065)	7,297	72%	53	1.5	58%	2.2
2-year public: Mid-sized (3,065-8,942)	3,071	71%	45	1.7	75%	1.5
2-year public: Large (>8,942)	11,029	70%	70	1.5	67%	1.9
2-year for profit: Small (<195)	9,244	82%	42	1.2	67%	1.6
2-year for profit: Mid-sized (195-542)	25,907	73%	44	1.4	71%	1.8
2-year for profit: Large (>542)	14,929	57%	93	3.4	48%	1.6
4-year public: Small (<4,970)	3,604 ▲	76% ▼	59 ▲	1.3 -	62% ▼	1.7 ▲
4-year public: Mid-sized (4,970-15,098)	11,739 ▲	71% ▲	71 ▼	1.8 ▲	70% ▲	1.7 ▼
4-year public: Large (>15,098)	8,362 ▼	69% ▲	54 ▼	1.4 ▼	69% ▲	1.7 -
4-year private: Small (<648)	6,795 ▼	79% ▼	73 ▲	1.8 ▲	71% ▲	1.8 -
4-year private: Mid-sized (648-2,327)	6,427 ▼	80% ▲	56 ▲	2.3 ▼	75% ▲	1.6 ▼
4-year private: Large (>2,327)	9,635 ▲	75% ▲	81 ▼	1.4 ▼	69% ▲	1.8 ▼
4-year for profit: Small (<349)	11,025	89%	26	1.1	71%	1.5
4-year for profit: Mid-sized (349-902)	76,617	78%	40	1.3	80%	1.3
4-year for profit: Large (>902)	44,993	80%	74	1.5	57%	1.5
Graduate Only	4,542 ▼	72% ▲	73 ▼	1.4 ▼	79% ▼	1.5 ▼
Overall	15,951	75%	59	1.6	68%	1.7

*seconds

Benchmarks were determined for traffic on a site-wide level, as well as for traffic across various search engines, social networks, and paid sources.

Not all institutions had traffic from every source. The benchmark for traffic from a specific source is the average among all schools with traffic from that source.